(b) if so, whether this innovative method will be studied by the agricultural scientists of ICAR with a view to ensuring its application on a selective basis depending upon soil; and

(c) if so, by when?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHARD PAWAR): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) ICAR has been already involved in the development of location specific Integrated Pest Management (1PM) techniques in rice. The method advocated to rice farmers involves: (i) application of organic manure, (ii) early sowing and timely planting, (iii) use of recommended nitrogen fertilizer, (iv) timely pruning of field bunds and (v) delayed pesticide application in the crop to encourage build-up of natural enemies and encourage natural suppression of the early season pests. This method is recommended Integrated Pest Management that the ICAR scientists have developed over a period of research on the rice varieties that are released from time to time. Integrated Pest Management in rice aims at reduction in use of pesticides. On-farm validation of the IPM practices and Frontline Demostrations are also carried out to transfer the cost effective rice production technology to the farmers. On-farm validation of IPM Technology is undertaken under All India Co-ordination Rice Improvement Programme of Directorate of Rice Research, Hyderabad.

Shortage of onion/wheat production

*58. SHRI DARA SINGH: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the production of onion/wheat in the country is expected to be less than the target during 2005-06;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons for this shortfall;

(c) whether Government propose to import onion/wheat this year in order to meet the shortage; and

(d) if so, the details thereof country-wise and quantity-wise and the total expenditure likely to be involved therein during the current year?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHARD PAWAR): (a) and (b) For the year 2005-06, the production target of wheat is fixed at 75.53 million tonnes. As per the available reports for the Crop Weather Watch

Group meeting held on 21.11.2005, the area under wheat cultivation reported so far during the current year is 51.23 lakh hectares which is higher by about 6 lakh hectares than the corresponding area reported last year for this period. Assuming favourable weather conditions, adequate rainfall, no major outbreak of pest and diseases during the rest of the rabi season of 2005-06, the production of wheat during 2005-06 is expected to be as per the target. As far as the production of onion is concerned, no target was fixed for 2005-06. As per the National Horticultural Research and Development Foundation (NHRDF) the production of onion in 2005-06 is expected to be around 60.34 lakh tonnes, marginally higher than that in the last year, assuming that favourable weather conditions would prevail.

(c) and (d) India is a net exporter of wheat and onion. During the current year, the export of onion so far has been much less than that during last year in view of high prices prevailing in the domestic market. Some quantity of onion is reported to have been imported by private traders.

Ongoing Railway projects in Southern Railway

*59. SHRI K. CHANDRAN PILLAI:
SHRIMATI S.G. INDIRA:

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the details of the ongoing Railway projects under the Southern Railway;

(b) the details of the estimated costs alongwith details of funds allocated to each of these projects, project-wise;

(c) whether it is a fact that most of the project works are not progressing satisfactorily due to inadequate fund allotments;

(d) if so, whether steps have been taken to release adequate funds to speed up the completion of these works;

(e) if so, the details thereof, project-wise; and

(f) if not, the reasons therefor?